Imamate and Wilayah Part 3

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This paper is based on first part of lecture four and all of lecture six of a series of lectures delivered by Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali in summer 2004 in Qum. Lecture five and the remaining part of lecture four relate to the ban by the first three Caliphs on narrating hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (a) and will be published separately in upcoming articles.

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Abstract

In the previous parts of this series, the importance of Imamate in Shi'i Islam was discussed. In doing so, narrations of the Prophet regarding the necessity of simultaneously holding on to the Qur'an and the Ahlul Bayt (a) were presented. Using mainly Sunni sources, both the meaning and authority of Ahlul Bayt were studied.

In this part, we will examine one of the characteristics of divinely appointed leaders including both

prophets and Imams, that is, infallibility. With respect to the Prophets, both Shi'a and Sunni scholars agree on the necessity of infallibility with respect to the delivery of the message, but there are differences of opinions with respect to their personal life and the period before the prophethood. The Shi'a believe in the Prophets' and Imams' infallibility during and before their mission both in their public and private lives.

Terminology

'Ismah literally means 'to save' or 'to protect'. An example of this is seen in the Qur'an when Prophet Noah asked his son to get on board, and his son refused:

> قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ

He said, 'I shall take refuge on a mountain; it will protect me from the flood.' He said, 'There is none today who can protect from God's edict, except someone upon whom He has mercy.' Then the waves came between them, and he was among those who were drowned.

In this verse, 'ya'simuni' means 'protect'. The literal meaning of the term ismah refers to 'protection'.

Ma'sum literally means 'the one who is saved or protected'. However, in Islamic theology, it does not refer to one who is protected from, for example, physical dangers or disease; rather, the person is protected from committing mistakes, errors, and sins. Thus, we can say ma'sum means infallible, immune from sins, or immaculate.

According to all Muslims, the Prophets are ma'sum. But they disagree on the extent of this infallibility.

Infallibility with respect to delivery of the message

All Muslim theologians agree that the Prophets were infallible with respect to delivering the divine message to mankind. Furthermore, we need to understand the divine plan for human perfection and the roles reason and revelation play in fulfilling that plan.

God's wise plan for creation

We believe God created us with a wise plan. He did not create us in vain or in order to preoccupy Himself. His wise plan was to give us the opportunity to improve ourselves and reach perfection. Some question as to why God creates people for the sake of self-improvement without Him gaining anything in return.

The answer is clear: God creates to give, not to receive, as God does not obtain or earn anything. A

person who is needy and does something, he or she must look for some kind of benefit. If I make a house, it is for shelter. If I work, it is for earning money or benefits. If I'm working for God, it is because I want to earn extra blessings and rewards. All in all, it is because I want to receive something, although God does not act or give to obtain anything. In a Persian poem the poet says on behalf of God:

I have not created the people to make some profit; rather, I have created people in order to show my generosity.

A generous person does not wait for people to approach him for their needs. A generous person constantly looks for opportunities to give to the people.

Thus, God created us for a wise plan: to give us the opportunity to become perfect and eventually achieve proximity to Him. This needs a plan for life. And this plan needs two aspects: reason and revelation.

The need for reason

Part of this plan is understood by our intellect, and this is why reason is important to Muslims, especially the Shi'a. However, although intellect is beneficial, it is not sufficient. We need revelation. Every human being appreciates life; however, for those who favor abortion, people use reason to judge as to whether a mother is free to carry the baby or not. But whether reason is used properly or not is another subject. We need guides. We need revelation.

The need for revelation

Revelation cannot remain in the kingdom of God. Revelation must descend. There are two ways to think of how we can receive revelation:

1. To send revelation directly to every human heart

This is not possible. Every person is not capable of receiving revelation. Receiving it is not as simple as receiving a letter. Anyone can receive a letter. But receiving revelation needs qualification. Not everyone can receive the most sophisticated philosophical doctrines or physical theories if he or she is not trained to comprehend it. It is not easy to be addressed by heaven. The prophets prepared themselves for many years and some received revelation after decades of spiritual struggle.

2. To have qualified people chosen by God to act as prophets

The Prophet Muhammad was not an ordinary person who was chosen by chance and then God sent him revelation. He was truly different from other people.

His piety was apparent from the very beginning: he never worshipped idols and instead worshipped God in the cave of Mount Hira. There, he had reflections and contemplations, rendering him fully prepared for

the mission. With this in mind, receiving revelation is still an arduous task:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

Indeed soon We shall cast on you a weighty word. (***73:5***)

In this verse, 'weighty word' means heavy to receive, understand, and maintain. Sometimes this is manifested in the physical world. When the prophet received revelation, his facial expression displayed that he was under pressure. When the prophet rode on a camel while receiving revelation, the camel could not tolerate the weight of the prophet, and his back caved in, even though revelation is not physical matter.

Thus, it is impossible to expect God to send down His revelation to all of us because we are incapable of receiving it. Moreover, people must be tested. If God spoke directly to the people and everyone was able to see Gabriel, then there would be no real test. The test is that you believe in ghayb, the unseen.

To sum this up, God has devised a wise plan for creation. We need guidance, and in order to receive it there are two possible ways: 1) to make all of us prophets, which is not possible, and 2) to have a few qualified people chosen by God to act as prophets.

If these prophets make mistakes in receiving, understanding, or teaching revelation, the benefit of sending revelation is lost. If you prepare a very big feast, and you want to invite people, it would make sense to ask a few people to give everyone on your behalf invitation cards, but if those agents themselves do not understand or misunderstand where and when the feast will be held, your purpose will not be achieved.

Thus, the Prophets must a) receive the revelation well, b) understand it correctly, and c) deliver the message flawlessly; otherwise, prophethood proves futile.

Infallibility with respect to Prophets' personal life before and during the period of prophethood

A controversial issue among Muslims is with regards to the prophets' personal life and conduct. Some Muslims believe that the prophets were infallible only during their spreading of the message although they may have committed some minor sins and/or mistakes in their personal lives.

For example, the Ash'arities, a predominant sect in the Sunni world, confine infallibility to intentional sins. They believe the Prophets never commit sins intentionally, although they may unintentionally do so, such as forgetting to pray or fast. Whether the mistake or sin is major or minor, they may commit it unintentionally.

The Mu'talizites, another predominant Sunni sect, believed that the prophets were infallible with regards to major sins: they did not commit any major sin intentionally or unintentionally, although they may have committed minor ones.

Al-Baghdadi, a famous Sunni theologian and the author of a renowned book al-Farq bayn al Firaq (The Differences between the Sects), stated the view of Sunni Muslims:

They believe in the infallibility of the prophets in relation to sins. They have construed what is narrated about their lapses as having occurred before their prophethood.[2]

According to Baghdadi, the Sunnis believe that the prophets do not commit sins and if a hadith or verse in the Qur'an suggests that they have committed sins, it was before prophethood. This implies that the Prophet Muhammad may have committed sins before his prophethood at the age of forty.

But the great Shi'a scholar and prolific author Allamah Hilli in his Bab al-Hadi 'Ashr (The Eleventh Gate) describes the creed of the Shi'a as follows:

Truly, the prophets are infallible from the beginning of their lives till the end, because the hearts of the people do not tend to obey those whom they have witnessed previously committing different types of minor and major sins and hateful or unpleasant acts.[3]

He points out that the prophets are truly infallible from the beginning of their lives until the end because the hearts of the people do not tend to obey and follow those who have witnessed a person previously committing various types of minor and major sins, or hateful or unpleasant acts. Such a person would immediately be deemed untrustworthy.

Sheikh Muhammad Rida Muzaffar, author of Aqaid al-Imamiyyah (The Faith of Shi'a Islam), says about 'ismah:

The reason for the infallibility of a prophet is that if he commits a sin or mistake, we are to choose between two alternatives: either we obey his sins and mistakes, and eventually do wrong, or we must not obey his sins and mistakes, which too is wrong, because this is contrary to the concept of prophethood where obedience is necessary.

Moreover, if everything he says or does has the possibility of being either right or wrong, then it is impossible for us to follow him. The result is that the benefit of his mission is lost. It becomes unnecessary, and the prophet becomes like laypeople whose acts and speech do not have the excellent worth that we seek, with the result that there will be no obedience and his actions will be unreliable.[4]

If one claims to understand the Qur'an and hadith, and by using that criteria he or she judges a prophet, it defeats the purpose in having a prophet because the mere ability of judging would give people authority. Someone who can judge whether a prophet is doing wrong or right renders a prophet useless. It is similar to following a scholar in which I label myself as the judge of his laws (fatwas), and if his laws

are satisfactory, I follow him. But if we can give ourselves the right to judge, we can claim ourselves to be scholars. We would not need to follow one.

Thus, there is no solution here: if we disobey the prophet, there is no use in sending him by God; if we obey him while he commits sins and mistakes, we will be misled; if we want to select him, we cannot do so since that would assume we are better than him.[5]

The destructive nature of sins

The Shi'a believe that the Prophets, including the Prophet of Islam, were all infallible from birth. They believe that a prophet must be spiritually prepared, and not a layperson who, for example, worships idols, drinks alcohol, and then unexpectedly becomes a prophet. Sins are too dangerous. Even if one does not intentionally commit them, he or she may still suffer from their destructive consequences. One who drinks alcohol without realizing it will still experience drunkenness. It will also drive one's spirit far from God.

In other words, God's choice is not arbitrary. To be addressed by God, to receive revelation and immediate communication from the unseen (ghayb) is so extra-ordinarily demanding an experience that it can only be borne by one possessing a high spiritual capacity:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

'Surely We will make to light upon you a weighty Word.' (***73:5***)

None can reach the requisite position if he is tamed by false belief or sin. Sins are harmful to the spirit and to the purity of the soul, even if committed unintentionally. The Shi'a thus highly esteem prophethood; they believe that the Prophets were pious and pure throughout their entire lives and that they are completely immune from committing sins or other acts which drive others away from them. Our scholars point out that even the outer appearance of the Prophets is equally important. The Prophets should not look unpleasant, as this can also drive people away.

Moreover, sometimes other people's sins affect us. For example, if the food eaten is not halal while we are unaware, it is lawful to eat it according to Islamic law. Although we are not committing a sin by eating it, the spirit will suffer. This is why some scholars are cautious about eating from unknown shops or unfamiliar people.[6]

The Shi'a also believe the prophets to be immune from making mistakes. If people witness prophets making mistakes in their personal lives, people will consider them as being no better than them. If a prophet forgets, a person may think of his own memory to be better and disregard following such a leader. If a prophet loses his own address, although it is a personal matter and not a sin, he would still lose the trust of the people. Those who are enemies of the prophets look for minor excuses not to

believe in him. If people witnessed a prophet to be forgetful and unable to show social skills, they will use these as excuses not to believe in him.

If a prophet before his prophethood commits unintentional sins, he is not prepared to receive God's message. If a prophet commits sins or even commits mistakes and people believe him to be ordinary, they cannot accept him as chosen by God. The Prophet was exceptional from the very beginning, even before his prophethood, and everyone admired him. He was given the title al–Amin (The Trustworthy).

Though they had the habit of deceiving one another from time to time, they still appreciated the quality of trustworthiness in the Prophet. Although the people then were immoral, the Prophet was not associated with any of the actions committed by them.

As a result, the people trusted him. It is also important to bear in mind that the Prophet's enemies constantly looked for any minor problem as an excuse and exaggerated it to mislead people with regards to the Prophet and his message. When the Prophet was given the message by God, he asked the people, "If I warned you of an army behind this mountain ready to kill you, would you believe me?" They replied, "Of course. We have never known you to tell lies." The Prophet then warned them about the hereafter and the punishment for those who do not follow the truth and commit immoral actions.

Similarly, if Muslims observe a leader committing unintentional sins, making mistakes, and being forgetful, they would not trust him even though he is truthful. If this is the case with fellow believers, how can people obey a fallible prophet who changes the people's lifestyles by making them lose their pride through having them destroy their own idols? This is impossible. Hence, it is believed that the Prophets have always been pious and infallible.

The Prophet is also believed to have been pious in his childhood. When a Prophet does his best in the period in which he is accountable, God will protect him in the period in which he is not accountable, such as during his childhood, or before committing mistakes unintentionally. If he does his best for that which he is in control of, then God will look after that which he is not in full control of.

Once, when the Prophet was a child, a group of boys were playing by carrying larger stones. During his time, the Arabs wore a long dress without an under dress. And so, in order to be able to carry the stones, they had to lift the bottom of their dress, making their private parts visible.

When the Prophet wanted to play with them, before he could lift his dress to carry the stones, he was stopped by an angel. Though he would not have sinned if he had done that since he was a child and was not accountable, God protects such a person even before he becomes mature, because this person is to be given a great mission, and thus, God prepares him in advance.

What is special with the Prophets and Imams that make them infallible?

A question then arises as to the difference between the Prophet and the rest of humankind. Some believe that if God had provided other people with special care, they would have certainly become prophets. But God knows in advance as to whom will be pious enough to be qualified for Prophethood; thus, the Prophet is given extra protection in advance.

This is similar to an experienced teacher who knows the bright student's future in advance. God may give the Prophets extra care while they are in the wombs of their mothers because He knows that when these people mature and are accountable for their actions, they will be the most pious people. This is not discrimination; the prophets deserve this. It is not because of the extra care that they become different; rather, because they are different God gives them extra care.[7]

The nature of infallibility

All 'ismah is not based on protection by God. The most important part of it is because of the prophets' will–power. The protection of God is for those perform exceptionally with what they are accountable for. So it is a mixture of one's decision, determination, and willpower; afterwards, God protects them. One cannot rely on himself if the protection of God is absent.

When Satan and the angels knew they would be tested a very important test, and all knew in advance that one of them would fail, the angels were anxious and asked God for help. Satan, who was known for his piety after having worshipped God for thousands of years, told them,

"Do not worry; I will pray for you, and you will all be saved." He was so proud of himself without having any worries, yet he failed the test because of his complacency.

Being complacent is the most dangerous state. Instead of being self– righteous based on one's religion or inheritance, one should worry about failing a test. Even the Prophet asked God for guidance. On one night when the Prophet (s) stayed with his wife, 'Aishah, she asked him why he exhausted himself by worshipping and praying, while God said, "Surely We have given to you a clear victory that God may forgive your community their past faults and those to follow…" The Prophet (s) replied: "Oh 'Aishah, Should not I be a grateful servant [of God]?"[8]

Therefore, we must always worry about complacency. We should be worried about our self a few times before worrying about others to ensure that we do not go astray.

The Reality of Infallibility

Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi in his Talkhis al-Muhassal explains the nature of infallibility as one who is able to sin but chooses to refrain from doing so:

Infallibility is when the servant [of God] is able to perform sins but does not wish to do so at all. And this lack of will [for sins] or the existence of something that prevents him from it is a Divine grace. So he does not disobey God not because he is unable to do so, but because he does not will to do so, or because there is something that overrides his will. Thus, considering his power and free-will it is possible for him to perform sins, but considering his lack of will or the existence of the overriding obstacle, it is impossible.[9]

There is both no will to commit sins as well as a protection from God. It is not merely that God arbitrarily chooses a person who will be protected from sins; people themselves perform their best, and consequently God provides them with extra care. This is a general law in the universe; whoever does good and takes one step forward, God will support them:

كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هَـٰؤُلَاءِ وَهَـٰؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا

To these and to those – to all We extend the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined. (***17:20***)

Both groups are supported: for those who do good or bad. If someone deliberately and insistently commits mistakes and sins, God may help him so as to increase his crimes. Whichever way you take and strive in that way, you will receive help, either to increase your goodness or your badness. The Prophets and Imams therefore do their best, and God then supports them. It is not an advantage if sins are impossible to commit.

For example, it is not a privilege not to look sinfully because one's eyes are sealed or made blind. The Prophets were able to commit sins and yet they choose not to do so. Indeed, many of us are infallible with respect to some sins because we realize its ugliness, such as drinking blood.

For the prophets, all sins are deemed ugly, and because they strongly comprehend its ugliness they do not commit them. Just as we find drinking blood impossible, the prophets deem lying and backbiting the same.

Secondly, the pious never commit sins intentionally. For example, the criterion of a prayer leader is that he must be just, i.e. not commit any sin. However, they are not infallible. He may still make mistakes and sins, but for the prophets, infallibility is guaranteed.

Al-Iji', a prominent Ash'arite theologian, explains infallibility as follows:

For us [the Ash‘arites] infallibility is that God does not create in them (the prophets) any sin. For the philosophers, it is a character (al-malakah) that prevents one from sinning and is caused by knowing the wretchedness of sins and the merits of obedience to God
and is strengthened by the repetition of revelation of commands and prohibitions.[10]

The Ash‘arites believe in determinism, that God creates our acts inside us. We are merely the subject or the place for Divine acts. Thus, a person do something good or wrong is not a result of their actions; rather, it is the creation of God. This view is false as it contradicts with the idea of free will and human accountability. In any case, according to them, God creates sins in laypeople, whereas He prevents the infallibles from doing so.

According to Shi‘ite theologians, the same quality of ‘ismah must also exist in the Imams because they are to continue the role of the Prophet in teaching Islam. If they fail to correctly present Islam with an infallible demeanor, they would not be fully trusted and the benefit of having an Imam will be lost.

For the Imams and Ahlul Bayt, there are particular arguments attesting to their infallibility. One of them is the verse of Tathir (the verse of purification – 33:33), which suggests that these people are purified by God a thorough purification:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّـهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

***‘…God only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a* (*thorough*) *purifying.’* (*33:33*)**

This verse means much more than simply not committing sins. There are many good believers who do not commit sins, which is the concept of ‘adalah, that is, the prayers leaders and the judges must not commit sins. However, an Imam is someone who is immune from committing sins and mistakes; they are thoroughly preserved and purified by God. God talks about muttaqin in the Qur’an – those who have piety and obedience towards God:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

***Surely those who guard* (*against evil*)*, when a visitation from the Shaitan afflicts them they become mindful, then lo! they see.* (*7:201*)**

People can be either Satan themselves, Satan’s servants, Satan’s soldiers, or all three. We also have better people, those who although they are not Satanic, they easily follow him.[11] For the pious, the Satans merely visit and pass by them quickly, but they cannot accompany them. When Satan visits, these pious people realize his presence as they quickly become alert.

For a moment, they may experience a momentary darkness. But because they are pious, God removes all the veils from them and they are enabled to see clearly and think properly, as said in the Qur'an. The Ahlul Bayt have the highest level of piety. It must be much higher than not committing sins or mistakes because this is applicable to all pious people. Ahlul Bayt are purified from God from any and every unpleasant entity.

Did the prophets commit sins?

According to intellectual and revealed arguments, the Shi'a scholars interpret the verses of the Qur'an about the Prophets in a way that they do not contradict their infallibility.

Prophet Adam's incident

For example, we study here the case of Adam (a):

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِن وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ

So they both ate of it, and their nakedness became evident to them, and they began to stitch over themselves with the leaves of paradise. Adam disobeyed his Lord, and went amiss. (***20:121***)

Prophet Adam disobeyed his Lord, and this is what the Christians call the 'original sin.' To understand whether Adam (a) committed a sin in its ordinary sense or not we should take into account that first of all, the mistake he made was not done in this universe. This world is the only world in which there are regulations, laws, and responsibilities with no further obligations in the hereafter:

Today you just act and there is no judgment, tomorrow it is the opposite.[12]

The hereafter is not a place for accomplishing our duties. That is to be accomplished in this world. This is the case about heaven in which Prophet Adam and Eve lived in. There was no obligation. Obligation began and will end in this world. Sin, in the in the legal sense, was not applicable to that world.

Secondly, the Prophet Adam did not know that there is a possibility of someone cheating and telling lies. He was so pious while in heaven; it didn't occur to him that someone like Satan would approach and lie to him. He was mistaken in thinking that Satan is telling the truth. It was a mistake, not a sin. It was before coming to this world, and therefore, it was not relevant to the issue of 'ismah.

'Ismah was after the birth of the Prophets or Imams up until their death, which is all in this world. Though he should not have trusted Satan, but he did so because he did not think that someone would dare to tell lies.

God called this disobedience 'ma'siya' because although it was not a sin in the legal sense, it was a

grave mistake that was not expected from someone like Adam. There are many cases where something is considered as a mistake or sin for the Prophets, but for ordinary people it is not a sin.

For example, if the Prophet Muhammad says his prayer in front of God in the way that we say it, this is a sin. In a legal sense it would not be a sin, but God expects more from him than he expects from us. The Prophets considered some of their own acts as sins, but it was not disobedience according to our understanding; it was a matter of not being able to perform their best. They always sought to do the best, as they never were satisfied with less. When a prophet asks for forgiveness, it is not because he has told lies or he has eaten a prohibited food. Rather, it was because of performing an action which was not at its best, or because of not remaining in the state of remembrance of God that they prefer to be in.

Conclusion

One distinctive aspect of Shi'i thought is the extent of infallibility with regards to the Prophets and Imams. All Muslims agree that the Prophet Muhammad was infallible during his Prophetic life; however, the controversy lies as to whether he was infallible in his personal life before and during his mission. The non-Shi'a may believe in the possibility that the prophets may have committed mistakes and sins in their personal lives before and during their prophethood.

On the other hand, the Shi'a firmly believe the Prophets and Imams to be infallible before and during their mission because if they were flawed they would lose the people's trust. They displayed piety throughout their lives and were completely immune from committing sins, mistakes, or other acts that may drive people away from them.

Nonetheless, the Infallibles do not commit sins as they have a profound recognition of its ugliness. For the guidance of humankind, infallible leaders are a part of God's plan for creation. This plan necessitates qualified leaders chosen by God to support humankind in accomplishing their role of servitude towards Him. By protecting the Prophets and Imams against unintentional mistakes, God indeed helps all of humanity in their pursuit of guidance.

1. Associate Professor of the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.
2. Al-Baghdadi, Al-Farq bayn al-Firaq, p.343.
3. Al-Hilli, Bab al-Hadi 'Ashar, p. 63.
4. Muzaffar, The Faith of Shi'a Islam, p. 21.
5. In 2003, we had a discussion at the first Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue in the UK with some Christian friends about the Prophet Abraham. We had our similarities and differences about the Prophet. One of the differences was that we believed in his infallibility. But some opposed and argued that the Prophets were not perfect and indeed their fallibility was better for them, because they could better relate to a Prophet who had shortcomings and occasional sins rather than follow perfect beings. I argued there that, as mentioned above, if a prophet is not perfect, he cannot receive revelation.

   Moreover, the argument includes a practical problem: whenever we have our own opinion about something and we are not happy with the position took by a given Prophet we may say that indeed this was one of the areas that the Prophet made a

mistake and I better understand. For example, if a prophet fought against oppression and you are a pacifist, you may judge the Prophet's position as a shortcoming and choose what you deem noble or what suits you.

6. Imam Khomeini's father, Sayyed Mustafa Khomeini, was a very pious scholar in the city of Khumain and who fought against the injustice of the governor of that time. He was eventually martyred when Imam Khomeini was very young. In an historical account, when Imam Khomeini was born, his mother could not feed him because she did not have enough milk. After some time, his father knew of a pious woman who had recently delivered a child who died during birth. Because of her piety and the fact that she was producing milk at the time, Imam Khomeini's father recommended that she provide milk for his son. The pious woman and her husband were grateful to serve the son of a Sayyid Ayatullah. So they set up a timetable for feeding. Imam Khomeini's parents did not bring Imam Khomeini, but they bought food instead, and Imam Khomeini's father said, 'For two days eat only food that I have sent and nothing from your house; after two days I will bring my son.' This is the caution scholars practiced with regards to what they eat.
7. It is believed by many scholars that before we were created in this world we were all in another world called 'Alam al-Dharr (the Universe of the Particles). In that universe, we were all able to witness the Oneness and Creatorship of Allah. This is why all human beings have an innate knowledge of God. In that universe, the people displayed differences in their response i.e. some were hesitant to believe and some were quick to believe and as a result they display differed ranks of faith in this universe. The following verse is believed to attest to this:

'And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this.' (7:172)

This idea is also used to explain why some people receive special support from God right from the time of their birth or even before. Of course, I personally believe that 'Alam al-Dharr was not temporally before this universe; rather it is a universe before this universe in order and not in time. It does not mean that there was a time we were present there and then we came here. These are parallel worlds. But in order 'Alam al- Dharr came before this current one, because the spiritual world is prior to the physical one.

8. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 95. The original text of hadith is as follows:
حميد بن زياد عن الحسن بن محمد بن سماعة عن وهيب بن حفص عن ابي بصير عن ابي جعفر عليه السلام قال كان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله عند عائشة ليلتها فقالت يارسول الله لم تتعب نفسك وقد غفر الله لك ماتقدم من ذنبك وما تأخر. فقال ياعائشة الا اكون عبدا شكوراً قال وكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله يقوم على اطراف اصابع رجليه فأنزل الله سبحانه وتعالى طه ما أنزلنا عليك القرآن لتشقى.
9. Al-Tusi, Talkhis al-Muhassal, p. 525.
10. Al-Iji', Al-Mawaqif, p. 262.
11. Shaikh Ansari, a great Shi'a scholars and marji', was an extremely pious person. When his wife was going to deliver a baby, the ladies who were available were to help prepare a special meal for her, that which needed a lot of oil to give strength. Sheikh Ansari did not have money of his own, although he had the money of khums which he used to spend on students. He thought, as I am the teacher of all these students, I can take the money for the students and pay for the oil. When he took the money and went to buy the oil, he felt regret and returned to leave the money from whence he got it. The next day, someone went to Sheikh Ansari and said, 'I saw the Satan in my dream with different kinds of rope and chains. I asked the Satan, 'What are these ropes and chains for?' Satan replied, 'For every person I have a special rope or chain to catch him and make him follow me. Some are very strong because these are strong believers, so I need to have a very strong chain or rope to prevent them from escaping. For some we do not need a strong rope; a thread is enough.' The man asked, 'Which is my rope or chain?' The Satan replied, 'You do not need one. You already follow me.' Then he saw a strong rope and asked, 'What is the strongest one for? Who is the one who you try to fasten with this?' He replied, 'This is for Sheikh Ansari. I was able to fasten him once, but he untied himself and escaped.' When he explained this to Sheikh Ansari, he realized that this was a test, and that although he was legally qualified to take the money, he thought, 'If I use this money, are all students able to use this money and buy oil for their wives? If all students cannot do this then I as a marji' cannot do this.' And he returned the money.
12. Al-Kafi, vol. 8, p. 58.

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